growth in the exports of textiles, as compared to the immediate preceding years, on account of recession and the slump in the retailing activities in some of the major importing countries, particularly the E.U., and the U.S.A. However, the growth rate has improved from 7.1% in 1995-96 to 10.8% in 1996-97 in dollar terms as per provisional figures available.

In order to boost the exports of textiles, Government have been taking a number of steps, which include encouraging exporters to participate in buyer-seller meets; fairs and exhibitions; enabling import of capital goods at concessional duty for export production; special arrangements for duty free import of raw materials for export production; ensuring increased availability of export credit etc.

[Translation]

Child Marriage

650. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL :
KUMARI UMA BHARATI :
SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY :
SHRI RAJKESHAR SINGH :
SHRIMATI KETAKI DEVI SINGH :

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the number of child marriages has not been declining despite the effort of the Government;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether some High Courts have recently recommended to the Union Government that penalty prescribed for underage marriages be drastically increased to punish the guilty; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereon ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) and (b) As per the provisional figures available with the National Crime Records Bureau, 122 and 159 cases of Child Marriage were recorded under the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Lack of awareness, low status of women, traditional and customary practice in some parts of the country like Rajasthan on the occasion of Akha Teej are the reasons for the child marriage. The Union Government had issued instructions to the State Governments of Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to take steps to prevent Child Marriages on Akha Teej on 9th May, 1997.

(c) No such recommendations has so far been received.

(d) Does not arise.

[English]

Production and Export of Sandalwood and its Products

6651. SHRI B.L. SHANKAR : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the total quantity of sandalwood, sandal oil and other products of sandalwood during 1996-97 upto March 31, 1997 and to be produced in 1997-98;

(b) the total quantity of sandalwood and its export and the foreign exchange earned therefrom during the above period;

(c) the details of the countries with whom India has to face competition in the export of sandalwood and its products;

(d) whether the Government have formulated any scheme or plan to boost the production and export of sandalwood products during 1997-98 and the Ninth Plan;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Data on production of sandalwood, sandal oil and other products of sandalwood is not available as no monitoring of production of these products is done.

(b) The export of sandalwood in its raw form is prohibited under the existing Export-Import Policy. However, to reduce accumulated stocks of sandalwood in State Forest Depots, it was decided on 8.12.95 to allow export of a limited quantity of specified categories of sandalwood and spent dust including deoiled spent dust as a one time measure. As per data available from Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Calcutta, a quantity of 1033.8 MT of sandalwood in the form of chips and dust was exported during April 1996 to February 1997 for a value of Rs. 25.69 crores.

(c) Indonesia, Australia and Fiji are countries which also export sandalwood and its products.

(d) to (f) No specific scheme has been formulated to boost the production of sandalwood. Export of value added